

IMPROVED DWELLINGS

for the

LABORING CLASSES

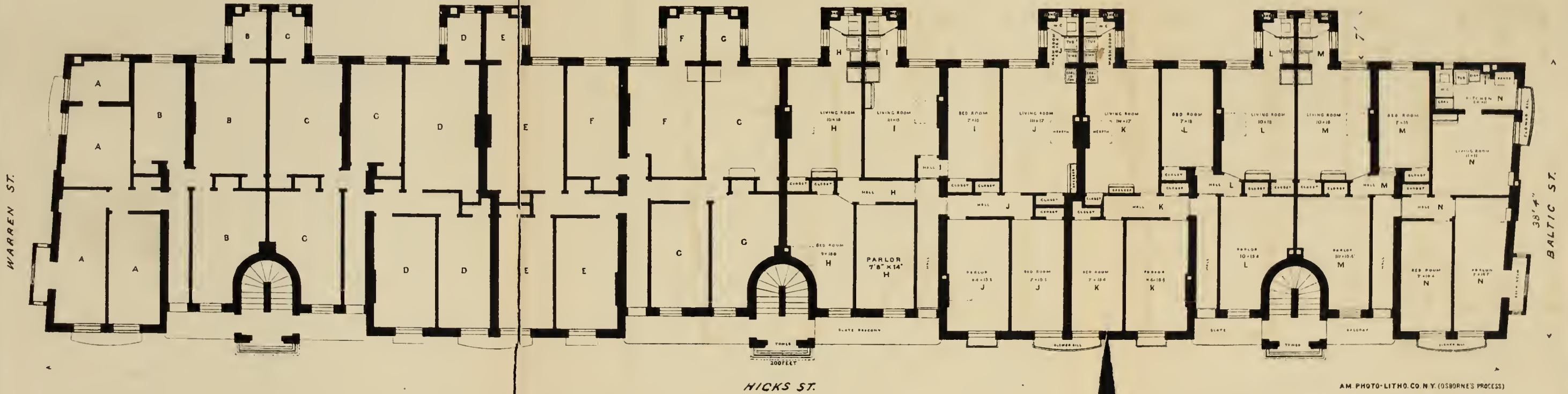




# IMPROVED DWELLINGS FOR THE LABORING CLASSES

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# IMPROVED DWELLINGS

FOR THE

## LABORING CLASSES

THE NEED, AND THE WAY TO MEET IT ON STRICT  
COMMERCIAL PRINCIPLES, IN NEW YORK  
AND OTHER CITIES

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# IMPROVED DWELLINGS

FOR THE  
LABORING CLASSES.

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SAID the Prime Minister of England, speaking at the opening of some new blocks of Improved Tenements in London, in June, 1877, "I have touched upon the health of the people, and I know there are many who look upon that as an amiable, but merely philanthropic subject to dwell upon; but the truth is that the question is much deeper than it appears upon the surface. The health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their power as a State depend. It is quite possible for a kingdom to be inhabited by an able, active population; you may have skillful manufacturers, and you may have a productive agriculture; the arts may flourish, architecture may cover your lands with temples and palaces, you may have even material power to defend and support all these acquisitions; you may have arms of precision and fleets of torpedoes, but if the population of that country is stationary, or yearly diminishes; if, while it diminishes in number, it diminishes also in stature and strength, that country is ultimately doomed. And speaking to those, who, I hope, are proud of the empire to which they belong, I recommend to them

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by all the means in their power, to assist the movement now prevalent for improving the condition of the people by ameliorating the dwellings in which they live. The health of the people is, in my opinion, the first duty of a Statesman."

What amount of attention does the health of the people receive from American Statesmen? Yet no subject touches more closely the interests of all classes of society than the conditions of life among the laboring classes in great cities. The badly constructed, unventilated, dark and foul tenement houses of New York, in which our laboring classes are forced to live, are the nurseries of the epidemics which spread with certain destructiveness into the fairest homes; they are the hiding-places of the local banditti; they are the cradles of the insane who fill the asylums and of the paupers who throng the almshouses; in fact, they produce these noxious and unhappy elements of society as surely as the harvest follows the sowing, and, by these, punish the carelessness of those who own no responsibility as keepers of their brethren.

No European city suffers so much and so unnecessarily from the evils of overcrowding as does New York to-day, notwithstanding some progress has been made in the last score of years. The *chance* to live decently, and to bring up their children to be decent men and women, is still denied to hundreds of thousands of the working classes, who would eagerly seize the opportunity here as they have done wherever offered. It seems all but incredible that the many generous hearted and wealthy citizens of New York, ready to respond to calls of charity, of science and art, ready to aid the poor and suffering throughout



the world, have so long refused to heed and respond to the nearest and most pressing call of all.

It is now fourteen years since the "Report of the Council of Hygiene and Public Health of the Citizens' Association of New York upon the Sanitary Condition of the City" was published. In this most thorough review of the subject one may read :

"The sanitary wants and the social evils of this city have become fearfully centralized in the densely crowded tenant house districts. The public dispensaries of New York annually provide medical care for 150,000 persons, nearly all of whom are inhabitants of tenant houses ; the various hospitals receive nearly all of their patients from the same class, while the Alms-house and the Penitentiary scarcely recognize any other persons than those long familiar with tenant house life. \* \* There is relatively a vastly larger population dwelling in crowded tenant houses in New York than in any other great city. In December, 1864, there were 495,592 persons comprised in 111,000 families residing in 15,309 tenant houses and cellars.

"The experience of other cities and the teachings of sanitary science warrant the opinion that the present rate of mortality may be reduced fully thirty per cent., saving 7,000 to 10,000 lives in this city during a year. And as for every death there are at least twenty-eight cases of sickness, this would give upwards of 200,000 cases of preventable and needless sickness every year."

All of this is as true to-day as when it was written.

The last printed report (1874), of the Board of Health of New York city, says :

"It will be seen that in 8,856 of the tenement houses in 1873, there died 14,109 persons. \* \* \* More than half of the inhabitants of this city are living at such a disadvantage as respects their domicile and their social state, that they are comparatively incapable of resistance to the local causes of disease, and, during the hottest and the coldest periods of the year, the more unhealthful quarters become excessively perilous to great numbers of their residents. The special insalubrity of these limited districts of uncleanness and overcrowding is shown by the fact that children under five years of age, perish at the rate of 250 to 300 per 1,000 of the living at that age (annual rate), during the hot weeks."

The President of the New York Board of Health, stated in 1878 that "9,846, out of the 18,582 tenement houses of the city are in bad condition from overcrowding, deficient ventilation, absence of light, deficient drainage and inadequate water closets and privies."

The waste of life is not, however, the greatest evil. The children who do live to grow up in the atmosphere of tenement houses are too often tainted not only in health but in morals.

The grand and far reaching work of the "New York Children's Aid Society" is done almost wholly among the tenement house population. In one of their last reports, Mr. Brace writes:

"Children's crime and poverty must always prevail to a large degree in New York, while the city continues to be the *entrepôt* of so much poor foreign immigration. They can only be essentially diminished in their sources by two great reforms—a radical improvement in the Tenement House system, and by "Compulsory Education." It need not be said that while the poor—old and young, male and female, virtuous and vicious—live as they do now, crowded into small rooms of large tenement houses, ill-ventilated, badly lighted, with imperfect drainage, and under no moral supervision, the young will surely come forth with virtue and purity soiled, practising bad habits, early taught by the idle and vicious, and with weakened bodies, as well as corrupted characters. The off-spring of the tenement houses must, to a large degree, swell the ranks of the poor, idle, sickly, vicious, and criminal children of this metropolis. The lowest of these houses become schools of vice, as they are nests of fever. There is no other large city of the world where such dense over-crowding exists as our poorest wards present, and this fact alone would be a sufficient explanation of the remarkable *quantity* of childish crime and poverty discovered in New York. There is thus far, we regret to say, but little appearance of any improvement in the dwellings of the poor. The new tenement houses built during the past year have been usually as badly planned as are the old; with dark and unhealthy rooms, often over wet cellars, where extreme overcrowding is permitted, and no moral supervision is exercised. A hard year like this forces a better class down into tenement



houses, where all the surroundings must tend to degrade the children, and form a new circle of youth, growing up to crime and homelessness."

The "New York State Charities Aid Association," has for years steadily and faithfully drawn public attention to the existing evils and the proper remedies therefor. This Society has a Standing Committee on "The Elevation of the Poor in their Homes." At their request, Dr. R. H. Derby has lately made personal investigation of the actual average condition of tenement houses and tenement house life. A summary of his report has been printed in the paper on "The Tenement House System in New York," read and distributed in the churches of this city on February 23d. This investigation shows how little improvement has really been made up to date, since the Council of Hygiene first drew attention to the matter.

The New York "Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor," has given liberal space to this great subject in its last two annual reports:

"The attention of the Association has of late been specially directed to the wretched state of the tenement houses in the metropolis. Its managers are convinced that it is useless to hope to alleviate the condition of the poor, or to check the growing tide of chronic pauperism in the city, until radical reforms have been made in their physical condition, and especially in their homes. Destitution, drink, vice and misery, seem inevitable accompaniments of tenement house life. \* \* \*

"Conceive for an instant, one of these dens, where, as has been well said, fever has a permanent lease, and will obey no legal summons to quit; where, if a single germ seed of cholera floats in the atmosphere, at once there ripens a black harvest; and where vice skulks and riots from year to year. What family life is possible in such surroundings? Drunkenness is universal. The small rooms, reeking with the odors of cooking and washing, are unendurable in hot weather, while in winter their close, fetid atmosphere, with the proximity of noisy or ailing children, is far from inviting, especially to a tired man returned from work—or possibly the vain search for it. Domestic harmony

is rare in such cramped quarters. Weary and querulous wives, hungry and cross husbands, wild and ungoverned children, will inevitably jar and exasperate each other. Where drunken brutality and neglect are added, the result is easy to foretell. The place becomes a kind of pandemonium. The father seeks oblivion in the "bucket-shop." The mother drinks persistently at home. Few girls can grow up to virtue in such dens; few boys can have such homes and not become thieves and vagabonds.

"The marriage tie is also gradually weakened; as the wife grows old or ugly, as children increase or become a care, as the home becomes disagreeable, the man is tempted to slip away to some distant place—perhaps with another partner—leaving his deserted wife to struggle alone under the heavy burden of care. Such incidents are of daily occurrence. They are largely due to circumstances. Neither charities nor churches will alone remedy the difficulty. The crowded habitations which foster these conditions must be opened to the tide of improvement, and then the light of moral and physical health can gain admittance, and bring about a change.

"Dr. Elisha Harris, Corresponding Secretary of the Prison Association of New York, testified before a legislative committee appointed to investigate causes of the increase of crime in the State, that:

"The younger criminals seem to come almost exclusively from the worst tenement house districts, that is, when traced back, to the very places where they had their homes in the city here. \* \* \* When the great riot occurred in 1863, every hiding-place and nursery of crime discovered itself by immediate and active participation in the operations of the mob. Those very places and domiciles, and all that are like them, are to-day nurseries of crime, and of the vices and disorderly courses which lead to crime. By far the largest part—eighty per cent. at least—of the crimes against property and against the person, are perpetrated by individuals who have either lost connection with home-life, or never had any, *or whose homes had ceased to be sufficiently separate, decent and desirable to afford what are regarded as ordinary wholesome influences of home and family.*"

"The evidence adduced by the witness above quoted, shows that in the city of Edinburgh, the reconstruction of 1,400 houses of the poor, and the cleaning out of the worst of the wynds and closes in that old city, greatly diminished the prevalence of crime, and the vices allied to crimes. In the first five years of these operations, misdemeanors and all crimes cognizable by police magistrates, diminished from 11,166 in 1868, down to 8,879 in 1873, or more than 25 per cent.

"The dwelling improvement of the poor quarters in Glasgow,



where entire districts have been cleared and rebuilt, are shown to have been followed by equally remarkable results. The lord-provost, Sir James Watson, reports among the results: total number of crimes reported to and by the police in 1867, 10,899; in 1873, 7,869.

"The persistence of sickness and mortality in the old crowded tenement dwellings of our city, and the rapid and very great falling off in the rates of sickness and death in the new and airy sanitary dwellings like Sir Sydney Waterlow's in London, and Mr. White's in Brooklyn, or like the improved districts in Edinburgh and Glasgow, show that a great work for the physical and moral improvement of the common classes, and for the prevention of poverty and causes of pauperism, must be undertaken in plans for dwelling reform in our crowded city. The homes of the New York city poor must be provided with sunlight, fresh air and the moral safeguards of real domesticity. The Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, of which Sir Sydney Waterlow is President, in London, report that in their nearly 3,000 tenements there are no fevers and deaths by contagious diseases, and in Glasgow the health officer reports that in the reformed dwellings he has not heard of a case of infectious disease. Let the deadly contagion of vices and crimes be exterminated from the habitations of the poor, and let the natural agencies of health and purity surround and fill their dwellings, as means of saving from pauperizing, sickness, and from the evils that medical charities and penal institutions cannot cure."

While the death rate in London has been reduced in the last thirty years from nearly 50 per 1,000 to about 22, and has not for many years exceeded 25, New York, with far greater natural advantages for health, has maintained an average death rate of nearly 28, though, happily, somewhat reduced in the last two years (in 1878, 24½ per 1,000). Children under five years of age furnish nearly one-half of the aggregate mortality of the city, though numbering less than one-eighth of the entire population. This is an average statement. In the tenement house districts the destroyer takes even a far larger proportion of the little ones.

In nine wards of New York there were, in 1870, 365,000

persons living in 17,110 houses, over 21 individuals in each house, and this the average only. Philadelphia had at the same time an average of only six persons per house, while the whole of New York city averaged fifteen.

We must expect that New York Island will always be the most crowded spot on the Continent, but this makes it only a more imperative duty to adopt every safeguard and employ every means to reduce the evil effects which overcrowding, almost of necessity, entails. London is not less overcrowded than formerly, yet the death rate has been reduced more than half, and almost all the plans pursued there and elsewhere to attain this end can be applied successfully to New York.

So far, the only legislation in this State bearing on the subject is the Law of 1867, entitled "An Act for the Regulation of Tenement and Lodging-houses in the Cities of New York and Brooklyn." A tenement house is defined by this Act to mean "every house, building, or portion thereof, which is occupied as the residence of more than three families, living independently of one another, and doing their own cooking upon the premises, or by more than two families upon a floor, so living and cooking, but having a common right in the halls, stairways," etc. The State Charities Aid Association and the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor have both published this Act in pamphlet form. The provisions of this Act are salutary, but their enforcement is left largely to the discretion of the Boards of Health instead of being made mandatory upon them; and this Act, good so far as it goes, still leaves much to be done in the way of legislation.

England is far in advance of us in sanitary knowledge



and legislation. Wisdom was forced upon the London city authorities by the devastations of plague and pestilence. Let us hope that in this country we may not need such harsh instructors. In 1875 general laws were enacted, entitled "The Artisans' and Laborers' Dwellings Improvement Act," governing all large cities in Great Britain. These Acts recite:

"Whereas, various portions of many cities and boroughs are so built, and the buildings thereon are so densely inhabited as to be highly injurious to the moral and physical welfare of the inhabitants;

"And, whereas, there are in such portions of cities and boroughs as aforesaid a great number of houses, courts and alleys which, by means of the want of light, air, ventilation or proper conveniences, or from other causes, are unfit for human habitation, and fevers and diseases are constantly generated there, causing death and loss of health not only in the courts and alleys, but also in other parts of such cities and boroughs;

"And, whereas, it often happens that, owing to the above circumstances, and to the fact that such houses, courts and alleys are the property of several owners, it is not in the power of any one owner to make such alterations as are necessary for the public health;

"And, whereas, it is necessary for the public health that many of such houses, courts and alleys should be pulled down and such portions of the said cities and boroughs reconstructed;

"And, whereas, in connection with the reconstruction of those portions of such cities and boroughs, it is expedient that provision be made for dwellings for the working classes who may be displaced in consequence thereof;

"Be it enacted," etc.

The London "Board of Works" had in November, 1877, twenty-two "schemes" before them, prepared under this act, for the improvement of "unhealthy areas." Of these the Board selected two for immediate application, involving a cost of £475,000, and the displacement of about 20,000 persons, who will be afforded healthy dwellings in new buildings to be erected on the site of the present fever nests. It would not be desirable, were it possible,

under our system of public works, to now endow any Board in this State with such extensive powers, and if judicious legislation is soon had it will never become necessary.

The most pressing present need in legislation is that a "State Board of Health" should be formed in New York; this has been done in many other States, and with uniformly good results. From such a Board would naturally flow the most wise and necessary suggestions for revision and modification of the building and sanitary laws, as regards the erection of new buildings, alterations of old buildings, and the maintenance of the public health by uniform sanitary enactments. Such a body would command and receive the confidence and support of a State Legislature, as no individual or any local board can ever hope to. It would be easy to suggest many ways in which old tenements, if well built, could be improved, but such recommendations will only be generally followed when the power of the law compels it, or when landlords find their tenants leaving their old haunts to move into newer and better homes. Meantime old buildings decay and fires burn, so that in the thickest centres of population plots may be had, from time to time, suitable for the erection of Improved Dwellings. Let us then have a State Board of Health and, with that, all possible remedial legislation; but meantime let all interested do their individual utmost to anticipate such legislation, and thereby aid and hasten it.

There are two entirely distinct lines of building to be followed in providing for the better accommodation of the occupants of the tenement houses of our cities. The one is the erection of small houses in the outer portions and sub-



urbs, and the other, the erection of improved tenement houses in the thickly populated centres. Land is too costly in New York, and taxes too onerous, to allow the Philadelphia plan to be followed on the southern half of the island, in meeting to any extent the wants of the laboring classes, who cannot, even when regularly employed, pay more than from \$7 to \$12 monthly rent. These must still go far out of town to find any single houses for any such rental, or else must live in tenement houses.

The shape of New York Island makes it at once the grandest site for a commercial city, and the most inconvenient one for residents, on the globe. It is true that rapid transit now affords the well-to-do classes the means of quickly going back and forth half the length of the island, at small cost, and any family in which the male head is the sole bread-winner can have the same advantage. When, however, the scanty earnings of the half-employed and poorly paid man have to be supplemented by those of the wife and children, a residence near or in the business parts of the city becomes indispensable. We shall do well to build separate homes uptown and in the suburbs for those who can afford to take them, but there will always remain a considerable laboring-class population in the heart of the city, for whom accommodations *must* be provided there.

It is remarkable that while our near neighbor, Philadelphia, affords the finest example in the world of a city of homes, New York has been allowed to drift to the extreme opposite position. Some few years since, Hon. Josiah Quincy and others made a close study of the Philadelphia system, and procured the passage in Massachusetts, in 1877, of an "Act concerning Co-operative Saving

Fund and Loan Associations," to further the formation of Loan and Building Societies in Boston similar to those in Philadelphia. Such a movement needs also to be speedily initiated in New York. The Pennsylvania and Massachusetts Laws are both published in small pamphlet form and are to be had of booksellers in Philadelphia and Boston.

These Loan Associations do their work thus. A certain number of persons form a corporation, under the law, and issue shares of the ultimate value of say, \$200, upon which shares the holder pays monthly instalments of one dollar per share. The money received in monthly dues, interest, payments of fines, etc., is sold at stated periods at auction to the highest bidder, the bids expressing the premium above six per cent. per annum interest, which the bidder is willing to pay for the use of the money.

The borrower pledges his shares as collateral for the loan (which cannot be greater than the full paid value of said shares), together with a mortgage, often for the full value, of the property which he wishes to buy. Dues and interest are to be paid monthly, and without diminution, until the shares are matured, when they, being of like amount with the loan, cancel the mortgage. The borrower evidently pays a high rate of interest but the profit above operating expenses of the company, comes back to him as a shareholder, and he has the great advantage of paying off his indebtedness month by month in moderate payments. Shareholders who do not borrow from the company, receive interest as much over six per cent. per annum, as the dues and premiums exceed the expenses. Similar societies exist in many of the western cities, and a dozen have been formed in Massachusetts since the passage of the Act, in June, 1877.



At the meeting of the American Social Science Association, in May, 1878, a report on the present condition of the 700 or 800 Building Associations of Philadelphia showed that these associations felt the pressure of the times less than most enterprises; that they were "free from even the anticipation of trouble, and are remarkably prosperous and sound, feeling only the lessened profit, the result of a smaller demand for funds. This results only in lengthening the time of the maturity of the shares by a few months."

Workingmen would hardly appreciate the advantages of a similar Act in New York, till they had been shown both the feasibility and comfort of small separate homes. In all enterprises requiring considerable capital, confidence is only given to small capitalists to invest by witnessing the success of large capitalists. Let it be once established beyond doubt that small houses are a good *business investment*, and it will be a less difficult task to persuade people of small means to associate themselves together for co-operative building purposes. The enduring prosperity of any city depends to a great extent on the direct interests of all classes in the government thereof. Taxes which are collected indirectly from rent payers through enhanced rents, hardly command the attention of house renters, who can lessen them by moving elsewhere; but the owner of a house has constant stimulus to interest himself in an economical municipal administration. New York City is being drained of its middle classes by the absence of separate homes suited to their means, and Long Island and New Jersey have profited by its loss.

There have been recently erected in the Sixth Ward of

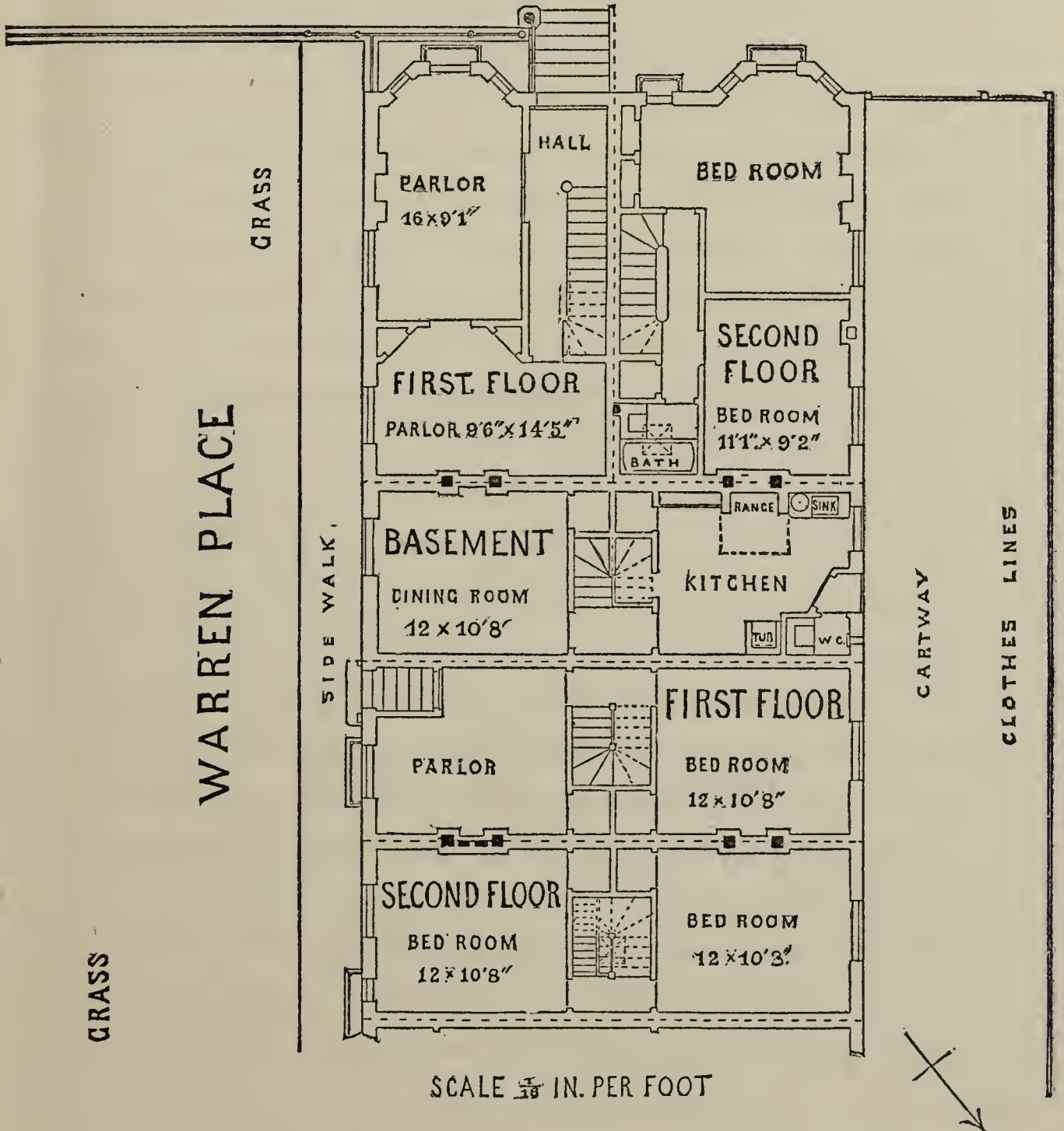
Brooklyn, within five minutes walk of the South Ferry, thirty-four small brick houses on a plan—novel both as to street and houses—which points a way to utilize the badly shaped blocks of upper New York. A plot 112 feet front on Baltic Street, and the same on Warren Street, and extending through, 200 feet deep, situated in the centre of the block between Henry and Hicks Streets, has been laid out with a private way, called “Warren Place,” running through from street to street. Warren Place is twenty-four feet wide, this being just equal to the height of the twenty-four two story and basement houses which front upon it. The eight houses at the ends of the two rows front on Warren Street and Baltic Street, and are of three stories and basement each. The cart-way for ashcarts, grocery wagons, etc., runs in rear of the houses, and “Warren Place” is laid out as a long, narrow park, with grass in the centre, and a flagged walk on either side. A low iron fence, with gates at the walks, extends across each end, and a fountain will ornament its centre.

The diagram on next page gives the lay out of one end of the block on west side of “Warren Place,” showing two of the nine-room and three of the six-room houses. A different floor of each house is shown, as noted on the plan of each.

The houses fronting on “Warren Place” are each  $11\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide and 32 feet deep; these have six rooms, each with a good closet; the staircase rises with a half turn in the centre of the house. The front basement is the dining room, and the rear basement the kitchen, being furnished with a good range, boiler, sink, washtub, dresser and coal closet. A rear door from the kitchen leads into



BALTIC STREET



a small lobby, opening on the cartway already mentioned. From this lobby another door opens into the water closet, thus disconnected from the house, though under the same roof. The first and second floors have each two rooms, or, say, one parlor and three bedrooms in all. The end houses are one story higher, and contain nine rooms. The fronts of all are planned with slightly projecting doorways, trimmed with slate and, bluestone and, under the windows, slate flower sills with ornamental guards.

The cost of the six-room houses is a little under \$1,100 each. With a little crowding, thirty-two houses of six rooms could be put upon a plot 100 x 200, or eight city lots. Taking \$1,100 as a basis of cost for such houses, when built in quantity of ten or more at a time, and assuming that a gross rental of twelve per cent. per annum, or one per cent. a month, will surely yield seven per cent. net, it is easy to figure what rentals could be afforded in upper New York. On ground costing even \$4,000 per lot 25 x 100 feet, the cost of land for each house would be say \$1,000; add \$1,100 for building, and we have cost of house and lot \$2,100, on which one per cent. per month makes a monthly rental of only \$21; with land at \$2,000 per lot, rentals could be brought down to \$16 per month, and, in the suburbs, land at \$800 per lot would reduce the monthly rental to \$13. Such a house is not palatial in any respect, but it certainly does afford all that is needed, even by a good sized family. In six rooms any ordinary family can live decently, and a little added to the cost of each house would make them suited to any neighborhood. The owners of these houses aimed, in this building enterprise, to erect the best six-room house possible for a cost of about \$1,000, to be substantial, convenient,



healthy and attractive. Their buildings establish beyond dispute the feasibility of erecting this class of houses, not only in Brooklyn but in New York; nor need they be limited to Harlem or the districts north of Harlem River. Not far east and west of Central Park, plots can be had which might be covered with small houses rented at \$25 or \$30 per month, with equal profit to landlord and tenant. In ten years, should the land become valuable, these little houses could be torn down, and yet the land owners would be wealthier for having built them than should the land be left idly to consume itself in taxes.

The people who would take these houses, now compete with families of less means for the best rooms in the best tenement houses; thus crowding the laboring classes down into very poor quarters. Were the better classes provided with homes elsewhere the pressure would be relieved, and a better chance afforded to the laboring classes. As, however, any rental above \$10 is beyond the reach of a majority of the laboring classes, and as few even of the mechanics or artisans can pay \$15 per month, we must consider seriously what can be done for them.

Can the present tenement houses be remodelled, or can they be let subject to such regulations as will furnish decent and private homes to their occupants? Those which are substantially built, on good ground and with sufficient space front and rear, can doubtless be made fit for occupancy; but many rear buildings, and some front ones, must be torn down wholly or partly and rebuilt in a better way.

The most faithful worker in the practical field of improving the condition of tenants of existing tenement houses has been and is Miss Octavia Hill of London,

whose work is well described in "Homes of the London Poor," published by the New York State Charities Aid Association, and to be had of them at cost of publication. Miss Hill's plan, briefly, is to secure the lease or control of existing dirty and neglected tenements, to have them thoroughly cleansed, to fix moderately remunerative rents, to collect the rents herself and insist on prompt payment and, by personal effort upon tenants, to elevate the family, step by step, to self-respect and the health and virtues which attend it.

A little more than a year ago Mrs. N. Miles, of this city, hired the tenement house No. 41 Park Street, a building so poor as to have been condemned by the Building Department as unsafe, put it in order, and entered upon a work there similar to Miss Hill's in London. The personal supervision she has given, and the enforcement of simple rules, coupled with generous sympathy and wise advice, have quite changed the character of the house. She has since taken the management of an excellent new building, at Nos. 48 and 50 Mulberry Street, erected by C. S. Sloane, Esq., who has likewise built a block of Improved Dwellings, with a frontage of 125 feet, on West Twenty-sixth Street, near Tenth Avenue. The Mulberry Street building abundantly proves, by the way, that even in the worst districts of the city, owners of property can, if they only will, erect and maintain with profit, well built, well aired, healthy houses, which tenants are quick to appreciate. Mrs. Miles is also now just entering upon the charge of an old but well built block of sixty dwellings, on Scammel Street, which a wisely benevolent lady of wealth has recently leased from its owner, in order to secure to the

tenants the advantages of the personal influence of Mrs. Miles. Ascension Church has bought some tenement houses, and hired others, in which a similar work has been done, with good moral and financial results.

Unquestionably any tenement house can be improved, and the condition of its tenants bettered, by the devoted attention of a faithful landlord or landlady, willing to give time and to sacrifice personal comfort for the benefit of the tenants. If the owner or lessee of the house cannot give personal attention thereto, he can in any case easily secure a janitor or housekeeper to live in the building. Any visitor among the poor, or city missionary, could name many persons fully competent for such positions, and willing to serve for very small compensation, whose influence on the tenants would be invaluable. The gain to the cause of morality would demand such a superintendence were it to involve lessened returns, but the income would not be lessened, for the landlord would quickly find the expense made up to him by surer payments of rents, fewer vacancies and lessened repairs.

Such superintendence will not, however, avail to alter faults of building construction. It cannot let in the sunlight to the bedrooms of a house built, as almost all existing tenement houses are, four, five or six rooms deep; it cannot make the dark interior staircase other than a shaft for the quick communication of noise, disease and fire; it cannot secure complete family privacy where all the conveniences are common property.

It is hard to persuade owners who have difficulty in obtaining fair returns from their present tenement houses, that far better houses can be rented to the same classes, at the same prices, and pay a sure return; but such is the



fact, as the experience of several London companies, and the Brooklyn Improved Dwellings, have abundantly proved. Their success is due to the strict observance of business principles, and the same care would ensure success in New York or any other city of the United States. There must be nothing in the management of the houses which savors of charity, as that taint will keep out the best class of tenants and weaken and demoralize those who come. The laboring classes now pay rents in New York which would yield a large interest on the cost of well constructed and well aired houses; but beyond this, the reception of a home as a species of charity is quite as harmful to the poor, quite as destructive of self-respect, quite as discouraging to the industrious, as is the direct receiving of alms without adequate return in labor. Fair return for fair rents, simple justice, and not that which is falsely called charity, is what the industrious laboring classes ask, and what they are entitled to. It is moreover unfair to wage a ruinous competition with landlords who may be striving to give the laboring classes good homes for their money, but who need a fair interest on their investment; the manifest result would be to discourage and arrest the erection of improved buildings, instead of encouraging real estate owners and builders to aid in the needed reform. To make the example accomplish any great good, it must be shown that it is to the interest of capitalists to follow it.

In July 1875, a carefully prepared report of the Improved Tenement Houses erected in London showed accommodations for 6,838 families, at a cost of £1,209,359, provided by twenty-eight companies or individuals. The leading organizations were then, and still are:—

	THEN ACCOMMODATING FAMILIES,	AT A COST OF,
The Improved Industrial Dwellings Company. . . . .	1,452	£274,773
The Metropolitan Association for Im- proving the Dwellings of the Indus- trial Classes . . . . .	1,060	189,028
The Trustees of the Peabody Gift to the Poor of London . . . . .	954	380,284

All of these have since largely increased their field of work. The Peabody bequest of £500,000, now entirely invested, furnishes homes to 2,341 families; rents in these buildings are so low, however, averaging 4s. 2d. weekly, that only  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. net is earned annually.

The Improved Industrial Dwellings Company had increased its accommodations in August 1878, to 2,387 dwellings ready for occupation, as follows, one room of each set being a scullery or wash room :

Five Room Dwellings,	183	and had then building	45
Four “ “	903	“ “ “	319
Three “ “	1,228	“ “ “	467
Shops “ “	73		
	<hr/> 2,387		<hr/> 831

making in all accommodation for 3,218 families, or say 13,000 to 14,000 individuals. It is a curious fact, to those familiar with the ideas of tenement house occupants in this country, that in London the top floors rent for nearly as much as the lower stories, the greatest difference being usually only sixpence per week.

The “Improved Dwellings Company, Limited,” of London, grew out of a private enterprise of Sir Sydney H. Waterlow, subsequently Lord Mayor, now President

of the Company. He erected, in 1863, a block of eighty dwellings, called "Langbourn Buildings," which still prosper in his ownership. Both the Improved Dwellings Company and the Metropolitan Association publish plans and descriptions of their buildings and methods. From those of the former the following extracts are taken:

"The plans for building vary in their arrangement, but in all cases—and this the Directors consider of vital importance—*separate domestic conveniences are provided for each family*. Thus each dwelling contains a kitchen or scullery, and is provided with a cooking range, having oven and boiler, copper, constant water supply, sink, coal bin, dust shoot, water closet, etc., and comprises in addition, two, three or four living and sleeping rooms, each having a fire-place and ample cupboard room.

"In almost all cases, the access to the sleeping rooms is from the lobby of the dwelling, *direct communication* between bedrooms being always avoided. The height of the rooms averages 8 feet 5 inches, and the superficial area about 120 feet. Through ventilation from back to front is always provided, and is much more effectual than any mechanical ventilating appliance. In the buildings more recently erected many improvements have been introduced, and among the most important of these are the *external* water-closet and dust shaft. All the living rooms, bedrooms and lobbies are plastered and neatly papered, and the wood-work is painted, grained and varnished.

"The elevations of the buildings are, without incurring undue expense, made as attractive as possible, the object being to provide a home which shall in every way tend to increase the self-respect of its occupants. The houses of workmen cannot be made too attractive, complete and comfortable, and experience shows that the working classes gladly welcome, and warmly appreciate, any efforts made to improve the condition of their dwellings.

"The rents of the dwellings vary with the local circumstances of each estate, and include rates and taxes, water, repairs, and all charges. They average two shillings per week per room, and range from three shillings and ninepence for three rooms, to eleven shillings and sixpence for five rooms."

The cost of the Company's property on 1st January, 1878, was £414,190. The Company has paid five per cent. per annum since its organization, had then repaid



£7,612 of borrowed money, and held reserve funds of £29,000 for equalization of dividends, £9,099 for repairs, and £3,034 for redemption of leaseholds.

The Revenue Account for 1877 showed :

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
To Ground Rents, Rates,				By Rents . . . . .	41,225.	9.	9
Taxes, Insurance,				“ Dividends on Invest-			
Water, Gas, etc. . .	8,782.	18.	4	ments . . . . .	896.	3.	3
“ Repairs Account . .	5,384.	0.	0	“ Transfer Fees . . .	9.	7.	6
“ Leasehold Redemp-							
tion Funds . . . .	497.	12.	11				
“ Interest on loans and							
advances . . . . .	6,808.	19.	9				
“ Expenses of Manage-							
ment . . . . .	1,597	19.	7				
“ Profit . . . . .	19,059.	9.	11				
	42,131.	0.	6		42,131.	0.	6

Payments for ground-rent, rates and taxes, repairs and incidentals, absorb forty-two per cent. of the income, leaving net earnings on completed buildings well *over six per cent.* per annum, a very high rate in London.

“During the last three years the company has lost nothing by bad debts, and the cost of management has averaged about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. only of the income, including expenses of collection. \* \* \* The rate of mortality for nine years has been 16.2 per 1,000, as against an average of 23.6 per 1,000 in the metropolis. In the metropolis the density of population is 42 per acre, and in the company’s dwellings about 750 per acre.”

The *London Telegraph* commenting on one of the Company’s Reports said truly :

“That false philanthropy which encourages pauperism by exuberant almsgiving, and destroys the self-respect of the poor by bestowing upon them charity instead of the means of helping themselves, is not the sort of investment from which a five per cent. dividend is likely to come. Sir Sydney Waterlow and his friends assume that the honest workman has a right to demand a habitable house at a reasonable rent. They recognize this is a want worthy to be supplied, not a piece of demoralizing almsgiving to be extorted from the purse of ill-considered generosity. They offer the workman the opportunity of buying that to which he has a just claim at a fair price, without being

held under any obligation or asked for thanks. Now this is the true principle. Any other plan simply converts a block of workmen's dwellings into thinly disguised pauper barracks. That the honest business-like system on which the company is conducted commends itself to the people whom it is intended to benefit, is proved by the fact that they are eager to take advantage of the chances given them for hiring decent healthy homes."

Sir Sydney Waterlow does not believe in the policy of driving the laboring classes into the suburbs, and what he says of London on this point is equally true of New York:

"Among the artisan classes the father of the family is, in the majority of cases, not the only bread-winner. In early married life, the wife often continues for years to earn a few shillings per week, and in later years when children have grown up, the boys go to work as errand-boys, etc., and in this way the earnings of the father are largely supplemented. The father may ride to and from his work by rail, but the earnings of the other members of the family will not bear this expense, and if they do not live near their work, they get none at all. \* \* When a mechanic lives near enough to his work to take his meals at home his weekly wages find their way to the family purse to a much larger extent than they can do when a deduction has to be made from them, not only for meals taken in a public house, but for other outgoings induced by the temptations of such a practice."

He meets equally well the objection that the houses supplied by the Company do not meet the wants of the poorest class. He says:

"It is quite true I do not provide single rooms. But one of the objects of these Improved Dwellings is to help to eradicate the whole system of living of which these single-room dwellings are the evil sign. We build for the future, and look forward to the time when no family need be compelled to live in a single room. It is impossible that either sanitary or moral conditions can ever be satisfied under such a system. No proper feelings of decency or self-respect can be cultivated in families living in a single room. Yet even the unfortunate class which overcrowding forces into single-room dwellings are helped and relieved by the provision of more eligible tenements. The

better class of working people are glad to get out of such miserable dwellings into better ones, and, as they do so, more room is left for the rest. It is the competition of better class workmen with the very poor which makes the rent of bad dwellings so very high; diminish that competition and rents will fall, and the owners of such property will be compelled, by the loss of tenants, to effect improvements which will never be accomplished in any other way. Improvements of this kind must begin from the top; if you simply draw out the worst layer from below, those above will sink into its place, while by taking away the upper strata, those below, relieved from pressure, rise into their vacant places. Even the poor widow, who can only pay two shillings a week for a single room, is thus most directly benefited by the provision of the Improved Dwellings."

New York is more fortunately circumstanced than London in this respect, for here every one who has regular employment earns enough to pay rent for two or three rooms at least.

The same gentlemen who built the "Warren Place" houses in Brooklyn, to which allusion has been made, have been interested for several years past in erecting, (under the supervision of Messrs. Wm. Field & Son, Architects,) Improved Dwellings for the Laboring Classes, on plans adapted from the latest and best of the London plans, especially those of the Improved Dwellings Company. They intend shortly to turn their private enterprise into a joint stock, limited liability, company, to further the more extensive erection of similar dwellings in New York, Brooklyn and elsewhere. The Brooklyn Board of Health published in their Report, issued in 1878, plans and elevations of these blocks. The plates published herewith show the plan of the third block, and (to the right of the picture) the first block of "Home Buildings." In the plan the rooms and hall belonging to each set are lettered A, B, C, etc.



From the careful description of the buildings published in the Board of Health Report, the following extracts are made :

“ The first attempt to build Improved Dwellings for the laboring classes, on plans similar to those most successfully used in London and other English cities, was made in 1876, in this city, by Mr. Alfred T. White. These houses are models in their way, and would seem to combine all the arrangements necessary, both for the family privacy and the sanitary welfare of the occupants. For the complete accommodation and comfort of a large number of people on a small area of ground, we know of nothing to equal them, either in this country or England.

“ Mr. White first constructed a block of buildings on Hicks Street, at the corner of Baltic, which was opened for occupation February 1, 1877, and so successfully had its proprietor met the popular demand in its construction, that it was immediately filled. These buildings are 105 feet front and 38 feet 4 inches deep, besides the extensions (containing water facilities), which are 7 feet deeper. A second block was completed and opened in October 1877. A third block is now in course of erection near the first buildings. As the plan of this block combines the improvements suggested by the earlier experiences, it is given herewith.

“ In all of these buildings access to the upper stories is had by stair-cases *open to the front*. The stairs are of slate, and set in solid brick work. In rising from story to story a half turn is made, and at the top of each flight a slate balcony, protected by an iron railing, is reached. These balconies, in the first and third blocks, are about 30 feet long. From each end of each balcony a hallway

or lobby runs back, and, in the block shown in the plate, private halls admitting to the rooms of each dwelling, lead from this hallway. Thus every family has its dwelling, A, B, C, etc., entirely private and apart from, and with no room opening into another, while all the rooms have *direct sunlight*. The rooms are provided with closets with hooks and shelves, and the living room with a dresser, and coal box to hold a quarter of a ton. Both sitting and living rooms have fire places and mantels. The height of ceilings is 8 feet 3 inches in the clear. The windows of all the rooms are of unusual size, and extend up close to the ceiling. From the living room a door leads into the extension, a small room  $7\frac{1}{2}$  by 5 feet. This contains an ash-flue, a sink, a stationary wash-tub, a window, and a water-closet with separate outside window. All of these conveniences are furnished to every family *entirely apart from all others*. The ash-flues, one foot square and ventilated at top, discharge into large ash-rooms in rear of the cellars, separated from main cellars by a brick wall, and accessible only by doors in the rear. No ashes or refuse are ever exposed on the sidewalk or elsewhere. All refuse is burned, and the ashes are loaded directly from the ash-vaults into carts, which pass out by a rear gateway. The water-supply is ample, and is carried up in a corner of the living-room, where the pipes are out of the reach of the frost. The water can be shut off from the sculleries by faucets placed in each apartment. The water-closets are all provided with cisterns overhead to insure instant supply of water. The traps are ventilated, and siphoning prevented by vent-pipes carried above the roof. The wash-tubs and sinks are trapped separately from the water-closets. The soil-pipes are open at the roof, and

serve as rain conductors. These pipes pass down against the back wall of the extension and out through the rear wall of the cellars into the sewer, avoiding any horizontal drains under the buildings. Every family has a large coal-bin and wood-bin in the cellar, numbered to correspond with its rooms. Hoisting tackle is provided for the use of the tenants. The buildings are all of good red brick, and all windows and outside doors are arched with brick. Floors are of the best yellow pine throughout. The flat gravel roof is used as a clothes-drying ground by the families in the upper three stories. For the occupants of the lower stories lines are provided in the yard. The slate stair-case extending from cellar to roof, is not only absolutely fire-proof, but cannot be reached by any fire that may occur in the buildings, forming an unequalled fire escape.

“The front of the new block is much more ornamental and attractive than either of the others. Open towers rise from the ground to above the roof, to afford better protection to the stair-cases, and add greatly to the appearance. The stiff lines of iron in the first front yield to graceful arches, an ornamental railing replaces the plain one, the windows are better grouped, and broad flower-sills with iron crestings break up the plainness of the front, and allow the tenants to cultivate their taste for the beautiful.”

A summary of the property included in these various undertakings shows :

“Home Buildings,” Hicks St., 40 dwellings, 5 stores, completed February, 1877.

“Home Buildings,” Baltic St., 40 dwellings, completed October, 1877.



“Tower Buildings,” 70 dwellings, 10 stores, completed June, 1878.

“Tower Buildings,” Warren St., 38 dwellings, 2 stores, will be completed May, 1879.

“Tower Buildings,” Baltic St., 38 dwellings, 1 store, office and reading-room, will be completed May, 1879.

“Warren Place,” 4 nine-room houses, 13 six-room houses, completed July, 1878.

“Warren Place,” 4 nine-room houses, 13 six-room houses, will be completed April, 1879.

Of the tenement dwellings there are

1 of six rooms.

25 “ five “

147 “ four “

45 “ three “

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218 dwellings.

To which add 15 stores and 34 houses, and we find accommodations for 267 families in all, or say 1,100 people, when the houses now building are completed.

The four-room dwellings comprise a living room, a scullery and two bedrooms; the three-room dwellings, a living room (with alcove for bed), a scullery and a bedroom. The floors are arranged in exactly the same way, in every respect, from the first story up to the top. This secures the greatest strength and stability, and also allows the duplication of all the parts by machinery, materially lessening the cost of construction.

The *average* rentals in *all* the buildings are

	PER WEEK	EQUIVALENT (LESS DISCOUNT ALLOWED) TO PER MONTH.
Four-room Dwellings,	- \$1 93	\$7 95
Three-room “	- 1 48	6 00

And the *lowest* rentals are—

Four-room Dwellings	-	1 50	6 09
Three-room “	-	1 30	5 21

The lowest rentals are of course on the top floor, and all rentals are increased ten cents per week for each floor, moving downwards.

Every tenant in these buildings is provided with a rent book, in which his weekly payments are entered, containing the following notices :

All rents to be paid weekly, Saturday evenings, *in advance*, between 7 and 10 o'clock, to the agent, at his rooms in the building.

Tenants desiring at any one time to pay the rent for four or more weeks in advance, will be allowed a deduction of ten cents per week on the rent so paid.

Tenants not paying in advance will be at once notified to leave.

Tenants will be required to make good any damage arising from their carelessness, and in case of accident to plumbing, glass, etc., *immediate notice* must be given to the agent, who will have the necessary repairs made at cost of the tenant.

No tenant is permitted to underlet any portion of his apartments or to take in lodgers.

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The attention of tenants is particularly called to the following notices, and they are desired to co-operate with the agent in observing and enforcing them, for the comfort and health of all.

1.—Halls and balconies to be swept every morning, in turn, by the tenants of the apartments using them. All sweeping, shaking mats, etc., to be done before 10 A. M.

2.—*No solid matter shall be thrown into the water pipes. All garbage to be burned, and all ashes thrown into the ash flues.*

3.—No clothes shall be hung out of the windows. No animals shall be kept on the premises. No nails shall be driven in walls or woodwork, except by express permission of the agent. Wood must not be sawed or split anywhere but in the cellars.

4.—Children are not allowed on the roof, nor to play on the stairs and balconies.

5.—Disorderly tenants will not be allowed to remain. The agent is directed to enforce the above regulations, and will be immediately discharged if he neglect to do so.

6.—The keys to bath-rooms may be had from the agent. No charge is made for the use of the rooms, but tenants are expected to leave them in perfect order after use.

7.—*In cold weather, keep the washrooms warm to prevent accidents to the water-pipes. Water must never be left running.*

No objection is made to these rules by the tenants, and they have been, in the main, faithfully obeyed. The weekly payment is more easily made by most tenants than a monthly one would be, as wages are usually paid weekly, and on Saturdays. The difficulty of accumulating for some weeks to pay the landlord is thus avoided, and landlord and tenant both gain by the arrangement. The liberal terms offered to those who pay for four weeks at one time are appreciated by the tenants, and many who could not yet avail themselves of the discount will lay by enough to secure it regularly hereafter. About one-fourth of the tenants have always taken the benefit of the discount, and another fourth have done so more than half the time; while over one-fourth, again, have never paid except from week to week. Every tenant having entire control of his own water facilities, there is no difficulty in fixing responsibility for any damage thereto, which is therefore sure to be a minimum. In short, the whole spirit of the regulations is, while leaving complete individual liberty, to encourage thrift and care, by making these to the interest of the tenant—a spirit having nothing in common with the too prevalent systems of aiding the poorer classes, systems which lower the recipient instead of elevating him, and discourage industry instead of stimulating it. Where repairs are few, and where loss by non-payment will rarely, if ever, occur, good tenants need not pay for the deficiencies of bad ones, and rents can be kept low at a profit.



Few day-laborers, even, pay a less rent than \$6 or \$7 per month, in the same neighborhood, for the ordinary accommodations. Here they have more floor space, with other advantages which make comparisons impossible. Moreover, the complete family privacy of the apartments in this kind of building allows a mixture of different classes and nationalities which no common house can keep under the same roof; the mechanic, paying a good rent down stairs, helps to reduce the rent of the laborer who is willing to go up a few flights, and who there finds the same accommodation within *his* means.

A census of the 137 families residing in the "Tower" and "Home" Buildings, early in 1879, revealed many very interesting points. The facility with which all classes can be suited in this style of Improved Dwellings is attested by the presence of fifteen nationalities! There were natives of

Ireland,	51	France,	2
United States,	40	Holland,	2
England,	10	Norway,	2
Sweden,	9	West Indies,	1
Germany,	5	Switzerland,	1
Canada,	4	Turkey,	1
Denmark,	4	Russia,	1
Scotland,	4		
			<hr/>
			137

The occupations of the heads of families were classified thus:

STORE OR SHOP-KEEPERS.	Tinsmith . . . . .	1
Grocers . . . . .	Shoemaker . . . . .	1
Bakers . . . . .		<hr/>
Dealers in Notions, etc. .	EMPLOYED IN OFFICES,	11
Butcher . . . . .	STORES, SHOPS, ETC.	
Druggist . . . . .	Clerks . . . . .	15
House Furnishing G'ds .	Porters . . . . .	5

Bookkeepers . . . . .	4	Bookbinder . . . . .	1
Watchmen . . . . .	2	Mason . . . . .	1
Foreman . . . . .	1	Plasterer . . . . .	1
Doorkeeper . . . . .	1	Plumber . . . . .	1
Shoemakers . . . . .	3	Carriage Maker . . . . .	1
Bakers . . . . .	2	Box Maker . . . . .	1
Butcher . . . . .	1	Mechanic . . . . .	1
Gardener . . . . .	1		
Weigher . . . . .	1		
	—		33
	36	SEAFARING MEN.	
Journalist . . . . .	1	Towboat Captain . . . . .	1
Teacher . . . . .	1	Mate . . . . .	1
Real Estate Agent . . . . .	1	Pilots . . . . .	2
Telegraph Operators . . . . .	2	Stewards . . . . .	3
Firemen . . . . .	2	Boatmen . . . . .	9
Laborers . . . . .	15	Sailors . . . . .	2
			— 18
MECHANICS AND ARTISANS.		WIDOWS AND SINGLE WOMEN.	
Coopers . . . . .	7	Dressmak'rs and seam-	
Painters . . . . .	5	stresses . . . . .	10
Printers . . . . .	5	Washerwomen . . . . .	5
Carpenters . . . . .	4	General Work . . . . .	2
Cabinetmakers . . . . .	2		— 17
Collar Maker . . . . .	1		— 137
Paint Maker . . . . .	1		
Hatter . . . . .	1		

2 Dwellings were occupied by one person.

28	"	"	"	"	families of	2	persons.
36	"	"	"	"	"	3	"
30	"	"	"	"	"	4	"
15	"	"	"	"	"	5	"
16	"	"	"	"	"	6	"
6	"	"	"	"	"	7	"
4	"	"	"	"	"	8	"
1	"	"	"	"	"	11	"

138 Dwellings occupied by 137 families, one family occupying two sets in one instance.

Of the 539 individuals composing these families, 75 were children between one and five years of age, and 37 were children less than a year old. The total number of

children in New York City under the age of five years is estimated at less than one-eighth of the whole population; in these Improved Dwellings the proportion is, therefore, nearly twice the average! Remembering, then, that the ordinary average death rate of children under five years is six times that of persons over five, we can recognize that a reduced total death rate in these Improved Dwellings means a saving of child-life of vast importance.

The experience of the past two years has put the moral, sanitary and financial results of these Improved Dwellings beyond question. Clergymen, physicians and sanitary experts, who have visited the buildings, the Board of Health, the tenants themselves, and committees from various organizations, bear uniform testimony on the first two points. The daily and weekly press of New York, Brooklyn and other cities, have described them at length, and noticed them most favorably; out of these comments the following extracts are taken, illustrating the general interest in the subject of tenement-house reform:

[*From the New York Times, April 30th, 1877, concerning the first block.*:]

"MODEL TENEMENTS AS AN INVESTMENT.— \* \* \* \* Mr. White has simply done what every builder and owner of tenement houses ought to do. He has planned and put up a cheap building, where the rooms should be light and airy, with good ventilation, the water privileges ample, and a proper arrangement to get rid of garbage; the halls and stairways fireproof, conveniences for storing coals and drying clothes, with privacy and good sanitary conditions for each family, and above all, a strict moral and police supervision under a faithful janitor. He has offered his forty tenements at a low rent—say an average of \$7 50 per month, to be paid in advance. The poor have at once appreciated what was offered them. Applicants for the rooms have immediately come forward in crowds, from both New York and Brooklyn, and all the tenements were taken, together with the shops. The respectable poor value most of



all for their children a good moral discipline in a house, and they have understood the advantages offered them in these "improved dwellings." The rules for payment are stricter than in any ordinary tenement, but, though half of the tenants are day-laborers, or 'longshoremen out of work, not a single failure of payment has occurred. That is, the poor who designed to live in these pleasant rooms this Spring, saved money from drink or other indulgences when they had work last Summer, and thus could pay their way. The strict arrangement was equally beneficial to the landlord and the laborer.

"The rents, as we have said, in Mr. White's building were low; but it will show what the ordinary profit of tenement house property is, that they yield him a little over twelve per cent. on his whole investment. Deducting five per cent. for repairs, insurance, taxes, etc., and we find a net profit of over seven per cent. on the real estate investment, which is what any capitalist in New York would be well content with in these times. The Brooklyn Model Tenement has indeed one advantage, and but one, in the decreased price of the land, as compared with New York. Taxes in our sister city are, we believe, heavier, but land is cheaper. The four lots in this case, if we remember correctly, cost at the rate of \$1,750 each, or say \$7,000; the building, we believe, some \$30,000. In the poor quarters of New York, lots might be got for cash at about double this, or say \$3,500 each, while the building would no doubt cost about the same. There would thus be an addition of some twenty per cent. to the whole cost. This addition to the scale of the Brooklyn tenement rents would not be formidable, making the average rent of a New York improved tenement say \$8 50 per month for each set of rooms. At present there are multitudes of poor people paying from \$10 to \$12 for wretched rooms in vile houses; though no doubt many sublet or take small dark rooms and poor quarters at \$6 and \$7 per month.

"A good improved house, after the plan of Sir Sydney Waterlow's or Mr. White's, would, we are convinced, fill up at once with paying tenants at the rate of \$8 50 or \$9. Why will not our capitalists consider this new investment, where philanthropy and profit unite in a remarkable manner? For it should be understood that the 'Model Tenement' is of no value, in a benevolent view, unless it pays. And when once such a house has succeeded, we may confidently expect that it will influence the mode of building of all other tenement-houses."

*[From the Times of November 5th, 1877, concerning the second block:]*

"HOUSES FOR THE POOR.—Within the past week the second of the large model or improved tenement-houses, erected in

Brooklyn, on the corner of Hicks and Baltic streets, by Mr. White, has been opened. This gentleman has thus provided for some seventy or eighty families of working people healthful and agreeable homes, under moral and sanitary supervision, and at remarkably low rents. This has been done, too, not as a gift or a charity, but as a sound investment, which should be made to pay its full seven per cent. net. Had Mr. White offered cleanly and healthy homes to working people, at such rents as would have caused a loss to himself, he would have merely founded an ordinary charity like a hospital or an asylum; a thing beneficent and humane, but not containing within itself the elements of a wide-spread change and improvement as regards the condition of the laboring and artisan classes. His 'improved' tenement house would not have been a 'model' for builders or landlords. Now, in the first house, built on Hicks street, with rooms for thirty odd families, he has been able to demonstrate that a capitalist can construct a light, pleasant house, with fireproof stairways, containing suites of rooms for working people, well ventilated, convenient and agreeable, with private water arrangements and cellars, where no nuisances are permitted, and all refuse is quickly removed, and disorderly and drunken tenants are not admitted—in fine, a clean and well-ordered home (so far as city arrangements permit) for laboring men, at rents averaging only \$7 per month, and yet make seven per cent net. \* \* \* \*

"The new house, just opened, is an improvement on the first. It contains accommodations for some forty families, and every room is light and airy. The kitchens (which are the living-rooms for working people) are large and uniformly sunny. Each set of rooms has its separate closets and water conveniences. The stairways are fireproof and open to the air, so that no tenement-house smell can linger about the place; all the closets have vent-pipes with traps, and the garbage is burned under strict rules, and ashes are thrown down a chute to the cellar, whence the landlord carts them away at regular times. Thus, all those indescribable nuisances which gather around our present tenement-houses are avoided. The roof is utilized for hanging clothes, and the cellar contains the coal-closets for each family. The rooms are fast filling up with respectable tenants of various conditions of life. \* \* \* \*

"It is certainly a remarkable and not encouraging fact for the humanity and intelligence of New York that no one has yet come forward in this city to inaugurate this great reform."

[*From the New York Evening Post of May 25th, 1877.*]

"IMPROVED DWELLINGS FOR LABORING MEN.—That all philanthropic schemes are not of necessity visionary seems



abundantly proved by the present and prospective success of the model dwellings for workingmen built last year in Brooklyn by Mr. A. T. White. That gentleman conceived a notion that better homes might be provided for the respectable laboring classes than are now offered them, without loss of profit to the landlords. He accordingly built a block of houses capable of accommodating forty families with "flats," or suites of rooms, each containing everything requisite for the comfort and separate maintenance of the family occupying it. The rooms are well aired and lighted, though not as perfectly as those will be in houses yet to be built, owing to the experimental nature of a first attempt. The stairs leading from the ground to the roof are of incombustible material, sufficiently isolated to ensure the safe exit of the inhabitants in case a fire should break out in any of the dwelling-rooms. A strict code of sanitary regulations is enforced; rents are collected weekly in advance; and any failure to pay rent or assessments for repairs, any breach of good order, or any other misdeed or default, may be punished by expulsion from the premises. In this way the most desirable class of tenants is secured—persons to whom peace, cleanliness and pure air are matters of importance. \* \* \*

The rent he receives for a suite of four rooms averages one dollar and seventy cents a week, yet the gross income from his investment reaches twelve per centum.

"It is to be hoped that enterprises of this sort, once begun and tested, will multiply. What business men and land-owners want to get at, in considering a proposition to invest their money, are 'facts' and 'figures;' that Mr. White can furnish both of a most satisfactory character we have no reason to doubt. He has had the good sense to season his philanthropy with the salt of pecuniary profit, and the success of his venture will do more to stimulate a spirit of enlightened benevolence among holders of unemployed or ill-employed real estate in this city and Brooklyn than a whole volume of sermons would accomplish."

A committee of workingmen from one of the great manufacturing establishments in New York recently investigated these Buildings, and made a report to their fellow workmen, closing thus: "Apart from the many advantages they hold out in a sanitary point of view, as well as their remarkable adaptability to all grades of the working population, the fact of every family being able to live so exclusively by itself would be a moral advan-



tage upon which every thoughtful parent must place a high value."

While the buildings are yet too new to allow any very close predictions as to the exact ultimate death rate in these Improved Dwellings, there is every reason to hope it will not exceed—as it has so far not exceeded—fifteen in the thousand per annum, against an average of over thirty in ordinary, old style, tenement houses. Zymotic diseases do not, and cannot, originate in such houses, and where cases are brought in from outside, they must almost invariably yield to the healthful influences of good air and sunny rooms, those best assistants of the physician.

With the financial results the owners are perfectly satisfied. The "Home Buildings," which have now been occupied two years, have earned over twelve per cent. gross or seven per cent. net, even with their low rentals, allowing, after paying taxes and all expenses, dividends of six per cent. per annum, besides one per cent. per annum carried into a sinking fund, and an allowance of one and one-half per cent. on first cost of buildings, carried into a repairs fund (not half expended), which will allow the buildings to be continually improved instead of deteriorating. "Tower Buildings" are still in the first year of occupation, but will not show poorer results in any respect. All this has been accomplished in one of the oldest parts of the city, a part where growth had well nigh stopped, and where the neighborhood previously furnished more apartments than families to occupy them. There is not the slightest reason to doubt that the financial result of a similar undertaking in any tenement house district of New York City would be equally good. Rents in New York City bear a higher ratio to Brooklyn rents than would the cost

of land and building in the one city to that in the other.

No success can, however, attend any effort which seeks to perpetuate the single lot plan of tenement house. To expect any healthy result from a plan which is limited to lots of 25x100, is to expect what is simply impossible. Sun and air *must* be had to make a healthy home; how can they be had on a plot closed, or likely at any time to be closed, both sides and rear by high brick walls? The erection of a good tenement house in a bad neighborhood is a declaration of the war of good against evil. Either the good house will make the neighborhood better, or the neighborhood will demoralize the better house. The work of reform must be on a scale sufficiently large to protect itself and to leaven the vicinity.\*

The further improvement of the dwellings of the wage classes continues to attract the attention of the wisest heads of Europe, though here it is but beginning to receive notice. Hon. Edwin Chadwick, the apostle of sanitary reform in England, said lately, in an address before the British Social Science Association:

“The blocks of model dwellings in London, erected by voluntary associations, present clear instances of the preventive power of sanitation. In these the death rates range from 14 to 17 per 1,000, while the general death rate is 23 in 1,000, and amongst the wage classes upwards of 30 in 1,000; a gain of one-half by the power of sanitation. \* \* \* We can arrange common conditions to multiply the most fatal orders of disease, and we can command conditions to induce them as effectually as to prevent them. We can reproduce conditions of damp and of filth, of darkness and of confined stagnant air, and induce the specific diseases found in those conditions.

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\* Since the above was written there has been published the Report of the Committee who fulfilled the difficult task of selecting the most practicable of the 190 designs for a “Model Tenement House on a lot 25x100,” in the course of which they state that, “while the plans selected for approval come nearest to fulfilling the terms of the competition, the committee emphatically declare that in their view it is impossible to secure the requirements of physical and moral health within these narrow and arbitrary limits.”

\* \* \* By repeating these conditions, we may ensure with certainty that more than half those born shall be in their graves by the fifth year, and that those who survive shall be stunted, squalid, irritable and weakly. We may produce such results, for they are produced from such conditions, and are displayed in outbursts that alarm and endanger the negligent administrations under which they have arisen. On the other hand, we can undertake to erect a city which in time shall be the reverse of all this, in which the death rate shall not exceed 10 in 1,000," etc.

A gold cup of the value of five thousand francs has been offered as a prize to that municipal or local authority or private association which shall, by the improvement of the dwellings of the wage classes, effect the greatest reduction of their death rates at the lowest cost, to be awarded by the King of Belgium at the next International Sanitary Congress. As it is required to maintain the rentals low enough to be within the reach of all, it becomes a delicate task to decide for the interest of the laboring classes, both there and here, what are the very best plans that ingenuity and economy can devise. Comfort and safety, health and convenience, attractiveness and usefulness must be nicely balanced to reach the best result with the least cost to the tenants. The great object in building is not to give lower rents, but better accommodations. No man can spend his money so profitably as in making his home comfortable and attractive, and he should be encouraged to take the best dwelling he can afford to pay for. While in London the day laborers can rarely afford the luxury of more than one room, and therefore are seldom found in the Improved Dwellings, in New York and Brooklyn these dwellings can be brought within the reach of the laborers as well as the mechanics and tradesmen and will thus meet, so much the more, a general demand and need.



No city has been so exposed to the rapid increase of that kind of population which fills the tenement houses as New York. It not only receives nearly all the emigrants from the Old World, but receives back from the country and from other cities a large part of those who have not found occupation elsewhere. Yet it is vital to remember that a vast number of the 400,000 people living in bad tenement houses in New York live there from necessity and not from choice. Almost every foreigner who comes to this country is led by the ambition and aspiration to rise to a higher level than his Old World place afforded him.

We are accustomed to accuse the landlords of avarice, and the poorer classes of a fondness for dirt and bad air. But let us first ask, are the landlords and tenants responsible for this? Are not rather *they* responsible, who, having the means to build better houses for the laboring classes and having the knowledge of the unsanitary and vicious conditions of the present tenement houses, stand aloof and content themselves with blaming the landlords—who, in building, but follow the examples already set, in default of better ones—and the tenants, who must take the only shelter they can find. The laboring classes of New York must live somewhere, and perhaps even tenement house landlords have been made the scapegoats for the omissions of those who knew better how to build and did not build. It is time to recognize that if the intelligent and wealthy portion of the community do not provide homes for the working classes, the want will be continually supplied by the less intelligent class and after the old fashion. Those who are unwilling to lend their aid to the needed reform forfeit all right to make charges

of selfishness against those who build what pays them best and the best *they* know how to build.

Too much time has already been wasted in discussing what is "the best way to redeem New York from its tenement house curse." One thinks legislation is to be the means of salvation ; another, personal influence upon the tenants ; another, the erection of new buildings ; while all these are good and all necessary, each in its own field. There is no clash between these various methods and while the question is under debate the number of old style unsanitary houses increases year by year, Let the lawyers and sanitarians reform the laws, let capitalists build Improved Dwellings and let those who are none of these give time and influence among the existing tenement house population, and the solution of the problem is near at hand.

Legislation may accomplish much, but let us guard against so easy an excuse for inaction. It is useless to legislate present houses out of existence, if better ones are not forthcoming. Let some better houses be built first and less legislation will be necessary to improve existing unhealthy buildings and the many foul old rookeries and underground dwellings ; for, of one hundred thousand families in present tenement houses, it is safe to say that three-fourths will move gladly into better accommodations, so soon as these are provided, and would do so to-day if they had the chance. If even a few such blocks were built, the leaven would speedily leaven the whole lump of old fever nests, and landlords would hasten to copy the improvements ere their houses should lose their tenants.

No law can be enforced so rigidly as the law of supply

and demand. There is no official mandate so powerful as self-interest, and no Court so omnipotent as competition.

It is not necessary that building plots be found in the heart of the present tenement house district; in fact, the Improved Dwelling may be of more influence as examples if built where more building space remains. There, too, land is apt to be cheaper, allowing the attraction of lower rents to would-be tenants. Now that the elevated railroads allow so rapid communication, moreover, a measure of relief can be extended to the tenement population of the crowded districts by stimulating the removal of part of them to less crowded localities further up town. From time to time, plots of land, vacant or with buildings of but small value on them, in the present tenement house district will come into the market and chances will be thus afforded to any company watching for them to slowly but surely redeem the worst districts of New York.

Wherever built, the effect of Improved Dwellings will be good. It is far better to let them take the course of business ventures and accept the tenants who *prefer* to move, than to make special efforts to secure tenants from the worst of the present houses. The desire for something better is the best preparation for it, and the best assurance that it will be used as if appreciated. The lowest class of tenants can be moved more easily and surely a step at a time than all at once, and they will drift up naturally into the vacancies made by tenants moving from dwellings better than their own into the Improved Dwellings, as these may be erected. The provision of Improved Dwellings is a plain, simple business, offering



better inducements to the capitalist than any security on the stock list, and, withal, the best field the philanthropist can desire.

From time to time the sinking of a steamship at sea, or a railroad collision on land, horrifies the whole civilized world by the loss of hundreds of lives. Investigations are demanded; the courts are appealed to, to determine if the fatal event was owing to culpable carelessness, and the entire community demands extreme punishment for the offender. Yet, all around us, is occurring a far more needless sacrifice of human life! For every hundred lives lost, the world over, by all railroad and steamship disasters, New York City shows a thousand lives lost by culpable neglect of duty. Well may its citizens close their eyes and ears to this daily sacrifice of life, and refuse to sit in judgment upon the offenders, for they would be called to pronounce sentence upon themselves! Let it be remembered too that the death rate is nearly as true an index of morality as of mortality, for these bear almost always an inverse ratio the one to the other. The same circumstances and surroundings which poison the body, sap its strength and hurry it to an early grave, are full of the subtlest of moral poisons, of evil sights and sounds and influences which drug the conscience into torpidity far worse than the sleep of death—a slumber from which too often no touch however gentle, no remedy however powerful, can rouse the sufferer. How shall the love of God be understood by those who have been nurtured in sight only of the greed of man?

Well it is to build hospitals for the cure of disease, but better to build homes which will prevent it. And,

looking beyond the first effects of such a movement, is it not clear that in the practical illustration of the willingness to better the condition of the working classes, on the part of those who have the means, lies the ultimate safeguard against all communistic ideas and tendencies?

The statesman may strive to arrest the increase of pauperism by more stringent laws, and to secure the surer detection and swifter punishment of crime. Here is a better way—a way to eliminate the very conditions which nourish pauperism, and which give birth to crime and shelter it. Here is one of the few methods of help which lead to self-help and inspire self-respect in the recipient—without which all are useless, and too often harmful.

No one need fear that too much may be done, that the experiment may be carried too far, that too many buildings may be erected. There are four hundred thousand people to be housed and more coming all the time, and no family who taste the comfort, health and privacy of separate, decent apartments will ever move back to the pest-houses from which they have come. There is no demand so steady as that for homes in small healthy houses or apartments, yet it remains the one want unsupplied by all the wealth of the great metropolis of this country; as philanthropy and self-interest, for once, however, pull in the same direction, let us hope that the existing evils may not longer endure and, while hoping, *let us not forget to work.*

